

Subj: Fwd: Nixon on using nuclear weapons in Vietnam  
Date: Monday, June 19, 2006 11:02:38 AM  
From: com  
To: 1

Dear Dan,

I'm writing about the options paper you wrote for Henry Kissinger. In your book, you mentioned that you refused to entertain the use of nuclear weapons as an option.

The document I'm forwarding to you discusses the taped conversations between Nixon and his aides, including Kissinger, during which Nixon talks about using nuclear weapons in Vietnam. Do you have any idea how Nixon came up with this?

A Ramparts article by David Landau in 1972 cited excerpts from what he called "The Ikle Memorandum" which had the title of "U.S. Responses to Enemy Escalation in Vietnam: A Checklist of Issues." In this document, Ikle laid out some options that the United States could employ if the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese stepped up operations in South Vietnam. One section of the memo deals with the threat tactic and recommends the cessation of peace negotiations. It says in part, "Because of Hanoi's long standing position to refuse substantive negotiations while the bombing continued, and because of the eventual success of this position, a U.S. initiative to suspend the talks after an enemy escalation would make the resumption of bombing or another U.S. response a more credible threat." FYI, the memo did not mention the use of nuclear weapons as an option.

Was this Ikle memo a part of the options paper you delivered to Henry? If so, did it represent a synthesis of options suggested by government officials you consulted? If so, why did Ikle write it? Did you assign different portions to different people, and Ikle had this portion to write, or did Ikle write the entire paper? Was the threat option added by you in response to Schelling's criticism that your options paper (the draft you discussed with Kisisnger at the Pierre Hotel) did not contain a "threat tactic"?

I'm ploughing ahead with my various chapters. My plan is to finish writing and then, if there are any holes, to plug them in with more research and more interviews. I would like to interview you again, if it's still OK with you, and if we can find a time that would work for both of us.

I enjoyed seeing you at the OAH meeting last year. It was obvious that you had many admirers in the audience.

Thank you and best wishes,  
Mai

David Elliott <ona.edu> wrote: Subject: Nixon  
Date: Mon, 19 Jun 2006 00:09:53 -0700  
From: "David Elliot <ona.edu>  
To: "Mai Elliott" <om>

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March 2, 2002, Saturday

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HEADLINE: NIXON WANTED TO DROP NUCLEAR BOMB ON VIETNAM

BYLINE: David Usborne In New York Tapes of conversations between Richard Nixon, centre, and Henry; Kissinger, left, contain candid remarks AFP

BODY:

TAPE RECORDINGS of conversations between Richard Nixon, the disgraced former United States president, and some of his top advisers during the first six months of 1972 have revealed him excoriating Jews and liberals and musing about dropping a nuclear bomb on North Vietnam.

In one segment of about 500 hours of discussions released by the National Archives, Nixon is heard discussing an extension of bombing raids over North Vietnam with Henry Kissinger, the national security



adviser. Then, rather abruptly, he says: "I'd rather use the nuclear bomb." Whether Nixon was serious or trying to provoke Mr Kissinger is not clear. In his baritone voice, his adviser replies: "That, I think, would just be too much." But Nixon then goes on: "The nuclear bomb. Does that bother you? I just want you to think big."

Reports of the recordings stirred a strong reaction from the Vietnamese government yesterday as well as from other corners of South-east Asia.

Phan Thuy Thanh, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said: "This is new evidence showing the formidable cruelty of some hawkish forces within the US administration against the Vietnamese people during the US war of aggression against Vietnam." Khoo Khay Kim, a history professor at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, said: "Asians in general would say, 'Thank God Nixon did not get his way'."

Matt Robson, New Zealand's arms control minister, said he felt "quite sick" about Nixon's comment, adding it "shows that the decision-makers were not only callous, but racist".

Almost half of the 3,700 hours of Nixon White House tapes have been released by the National Archives.

The latest batch allows the public once more to eavesdrop on the presidency 30 years on. The tapes offer new glimpses of the already documented dark side of the former president.

An irascible-sounding Nixon is heard at one point defending his ambassador to France, Arthur Watson, after he had been exposed in the newspapers for drunkenly groping flight attendants during a flight home. "Look, people get drunk," he said. "People chase girls. And the point is, it's a hell of a lot better for them to get drunk than to take drugs. It's better to chase girls than boys."

After word reached the White House that there had been an assassination attempt against George Wallace, a former governor of Alabama, Mr Nixon reacted almost instantly by discussing ways to earn partisan points from the tragedy by spreading rumours that the gunman was a liberal tied to the Democrats.

When Pat Nixon, the first lady, asked him about the shooting, he replied, "Bad people did it ...the liberals."

In one conversation with John Connally, a former governor of Texas who was alongside John F Kennedy when he was shot in Dallas in 1963, Nixon warned that, "without getting into any anti-Semitism", he was worried about the influence of a "terrible liberal Jewish clique" in government. "It erodes our confidence, our strength. They're just untrustworthy. Look at the Justice Department. It's full of Jews."

He is similarly heard deploring the Jewish influence in the media. There is also a petty snippet in which he is heard complaining about the way the TV personality Barbara Walters had treated his daughter, Tricia, in an interview.

He dictates a "nasty little note" to be sent to Ms Walters, but under a false name, telling her: "You're just not smart enough to deal with Tricia Nixon. She made you look like an amateur."

The former president's frustration with the slow progress of the war in Vietnam, and with the spread of peace protests at home, that stands out from the latest tapes.

Mixing his metaphors, Mr Nixon is heard worrying about "a wild orgasm of anarchists sweeping across the country like a prairie fire". Once again, he decides that the media is mostly to blame for encouraging the protesters.

At another point, Nixon chides Mr Kissinger for being too concerned at civilian casualties. "I don't give a damn," Nixon says. "I don't care."

And, in a separate conversation with his chief of staff, H R Haldeman, he questions the authenticity of the photograph of a young girl running naked down a street, fleeing a napalm attack in South Vietnam.

The picture became a world symbol of the horror of the Vietnam conflict. "I'm wondering if that was fixed," Nixon muses after seeing the photograph. Mr Haldeman replies: "Could have been."

Historians were sceptical yesterday at the sincerity of Mr Nixon's nuclear bomb remark. "It was politically unacceptable," Stanley Karnow, who has chronicled the Vietnam War, argued. "Just because he said it, it doesn't mean it was really an option."

In the first half of 1972, Nixon not only paid his historic visit to China but also faced re-election later that year. He is heard worrying out loud on tape about the political consequences of losing the war in Vietnam and fears that the Russians would pull out of a planned arms-control summit.

"The point is," he tells Mr Kissinger, "we have to realise that if we lose Vietnam and the summit, there's no way that the election can be saved." He went on to win a second term in November that year.

Rupert Cornwell,

Review, page 4

IN HIS OWN WORDS

On bombing Vietnam

To Henry Kissinger

"The only place you and I disagree ... is with regard to the bombing. You're so goddamned concerned about the civilians and I don't give a damn. I don't care."

To Henry Kissinger

"I'd rather use the nuclear bomb ... Does that bother you? I just want you to think big."

On George McGovern

Later nominated by the Democrats to run against him in his 1972 bid for re-election.



"A damn socialist with a blind spot for communists."

On the shooting of George Wallace

Instructing aides on spreading rumours about the would-be assassin of the Alabama governor

"Just say he was a supporter of McGovern and Kennedy. Just put that out ... Say you have it on unmistakable evidence."

LOAD-DATE: April 09, 2002